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ABSTRACT

Belgium's Renewed Primary School (RPS) project began in 1973 as part of a national commitment to innovative reform. The project's many goals focused on increasing interdependence among educational resources to support a more individualized, humanized, and effective response to pupil needs. Schools participating in the RPS effort usually selected one or two innovations for implementation from among those suggested. Evaluation of the project's initial progress in 1981 revealed that many local schools had implemented innovations marginally if at all. Expansion of the project to additional schools was halted while a second study was undertaken to determine how local school policies affecting innovation related to the degree of implementation achieved. This report discusses the nature of the RPS project, the factors leading to the second evaluation study, the theoretical framework of the study, the interviewing method and questions used, the variables found to affect implementation, the local policies identified, the measurement of implementation levels, and the relationships found between policies and implementation. The document concludes with a report on the first stages of a study to determine how local school policies concerning innovation become institutionalized. This study sought further data from schools examined in the earlier evaluations. (PGD)

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THE RENEWED PRIMARY SCHOOL IN BELGIUM

THE LOCAL INNOVATION POLICY AND

INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF INNOVATIONS

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The Renewed Primary School in Belgium

The local innovation policy and institutionalization of innovations

1. Background and general features

In this paper we limit ourselves to the description of the development and evaluation of the so-called "Vernieuwd Lager Onderwijs" (Renewed Primary School) in the Dutch speaking part of Belgium. The organisation and innovation policy concerning the renewal of the primary school in the French speaking part (Wallonië) are different from the developments in Flanders.

The project "Renewed Primary School" (R.P.S.), started in September 1973. In 1972-73 a national committee was established to develop a general strategy, as a framework for the renewal of the primary education.

The R.P.S. can be conceived as a large-scale innovation project. We want to draw attention to three important features of a so-called large-scale innovation.

1.1. The R.P.S. : a bundle of innovations

Schools and teachers have to cope with a reform, which is in fact a bundle of innovations. The main goals of the R.P.S. are related to the following themes.

- Enhanced integration and interdependence between the kindergarten (2.5 years - 6 years) and the elementary school (6-12 years). Also an enhanced continuity between the different grades of the primary school.

- Increased and more effective individualization during the elementary grades, particularly in relation to reading and arithmetic. It's expected that teachers adapt their teaching activities taking into consideration differences among pupils.

remedial teacher, so that pupils with special problems in regular classrooms will be worked with more effectively. There is also an emphasis on more collaboration among teachers and pupils from different grades.

- Increased emphasis on the socio-emotional and creative development of the pupils. A more child-directed approach is one of the key ideas of the R.P.S.

- Better interdependence with resources in the community environment, in terms both of the students going out into the community to learn and of people from the community being used as resource-people on an ad-hoc basis within the school.

In summary : the main philosophical theme of this innovation-bundle is more interdependence among educational resources to support a more individualized, humanised, and effective response to pupils.

So, a large-scale innovation project is characterised by its multidimensionality; a number of important objectives must be accomplished simultaneously and coherently. Each innovation, as part of a bundle, points to significant objectives. As a matter of fact, there are a number of indications which show that the school and the teachers spontaneously set for themselves certain reductions. Thus we observed that a lot of R.P.S. schools are only engaged in one or two innovations out of the whole bundle.
This striking fact for large-scale innovation projects has made us pay attention to a (justified) reduction.

Taking into account this multidimensionality and the connected multiplicity and multiformity of objectives, it is not surprising that participants on different levels often divergently emphasise different aspects of a large-scale project. Change facilitators possibly stress other goals than principals. Teachers perhaps primarily pay attention to consequences related to their class practice. This can result in a relatively wide gap between the original plans, the decisions in a school and the actual implementation. In other words, projects are filtered, stresses are laid and various choices lead to different realisations.

When investigating the implementation of large-scale projects, it is consequently not to be expected that the schools and the teachers involved

enter different innovations as priorities in their planning. Even if the same innovation is included (for instance individualized reading instruction), it will still take on very divergent configurations.

1.2. A growing number of participating schools

Every schoolyear, the number of participating schools expands. So, between 1973 and 1980 the number has expanded very rapidly (1973 : 9 schools; 1976 : 25 schools; 1977 : 66 schools; 1980 : 277 schools) (1). Policy people and also change facilitators defend the idea that in a 15 to 20-year period all elementary schools must be involved in the project.

It is customary to start out with a limited number of schools in a large-scale project. Before incorporating a great number of schools in the project, it is considered desirable to test a number of starting-points (objectives) on their realizability during an experimental period of two to three years, to develop materials on a limited scale, to experiment with co-operation, to look for adapted forms of external and internal facilitation, etc. These first-generation schools are often specially facilitated : the number of external change agents - and in certain cases also of internal facilitators - is sufficiently great to co-operate relatively intensively with the teachers involved.

There is the general assumption that material (for instance for individualized reading instruction) developed for and partly by the first generation of schools can be easily transferred to the second and the third generation. Or that the interventions planned and implemented for the first generation, will be useful for the other schools, etc. Experience teaches us, however, that this adoption of materials not always produces the intended effects. In other words, this doctrine of transferability insufficiently takes into account the fact that each participating school interprets and adapts a number of starting-points (objectives) in a manner adjusted to its concrete organisation and that schools agree to a number of aspects without consciously aiming at all aspects of the large-scale project to be realised.

It is our assumption, that this doctrine of transferability, still prevails in many West-European countries.

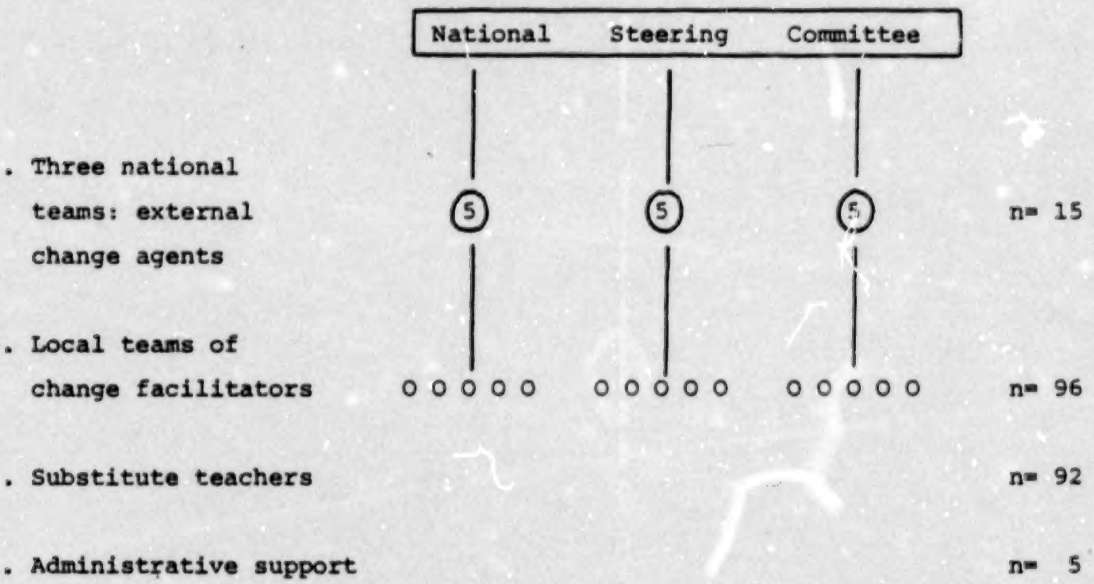
Briefly, this doctrine comes down to the fact that some policy people think

that specific results can be expected as time goes by. In other words, the proposed innovation will be adopted with a high fidelity-degree and will lead to clear-cut results in different circumstances.

1.3. General description of the support structure

In the context of the R.P.S. a complex support structure is created. The following figure gives a general overview of the existing support structure.

Fig. 1 : R.P.S. : the external support structure



The National Steering Committee (Commissie Onderwijsvernieuwing Basisonderwijs) is responsible for the project and for the general development of it. It is also responsible for a yearly evaluation report and for the formulation of advice to the Minister. The Steering Committee is made up of representatives from the major interest groups in elementary school : the organizing bodies (state, church, municipalities), the inspectorate, the parents, the unions, the universities, the teacher training colleges, the psycho-medical-social centres.

The three national teams of external change agents (related to the three organizing bodies) are responsible for the national co-ordination. They attend the monthly meeting of the National Steering Committee for a discussion about the general aims of the project; they present long-term

change facilitators, etc. They are also responsible for the redaction of the yearly evaluation report. Most of the members of the national teams are former teachers.
During the first two years the change agents and the National Steering Committee, in co-operation with the staff of the 9 schools, parents, local inspectors and members of the psycho-medical-social centres, determined the future direction that would be important for the renewal of the primary school. This process-oriented democratic approach to educational change was unusual and unique for Belgium.

The members of the local teams (all of them are former teachers) work with the faculty of 3 to 4 local schools. Mostly, they organise different kinds of in-service activities, have discussions with the principal about the way the general aims of the project can be implemented in the local school, etc. In other words, the local change facilitators try to organize a school-focused implementation plan.

During the year the local change facilitators organise at least once a month a workshop for all the teachers of a local school. That means that the staff can be involved in a discussion about the next future of their schools, about the activities which seem necessary for the implementation of the integration of the kindergarten and the elementary school; they also can evaluate past experiences, etc. During that workshop pupils stay at school; but the teachers are replaced by the so-called "mobile" teachers (substitute teachers). These teachers go from one school to another in order to give regular teachers the opportunity to attend the in- service workshop.

2. A first evaluation of the R.P.S. (1979-'81)

During the schoolyear 1978-79, members of the national teams, suggested the idea of a so-called "external" evaluation. The National Steering Committee established an evaluation committee which formulated several ideas and suggestions for the evaluation of the R.P.S. Two teams (of three researchers) - one at the University of Gent and another one at the University of Leuven - have collected a lot of data about the development and implementation of the R.P.S. A first interim-report was published in June 1980; and an end-report in 1981. The detailed and voluminous reports have been summarized in a synthesis-report. This report has been widely disseminated

The main findings have been fully discussed with the members of the National Steering Committee and with the change facilitators. Several implications for the innovation policy and for facilitation activities have been discussed and formulated. One of the main conclusions was to stop the expansion of the number of participating schools. The observation of non-implementation in some schools and the fact that in some schools the R.P.S. was reduced to a very minor change, led to the conclusion to work more closely and more intensively with the already engaged schools.

This first evaluation study can be considered as a broad exploration of several aspects of the R.P.S. and of the innovation process itself. Second : all important participants have been involved in the evaluation. Third : feedback sessions have been organized as much as possible by the researchers, not only in order to start discussions about the main research findings, but also to emphasise the importance of evaluation research as a integrating part of a broad-scale innovation project.

3. A second evaluation of the R.P.S. (1981-'85)

Some of the main results of the first evaluation study (non-implementation in many schools; minor changes in other schools; major differences between schools; problems related to the development of adapted intervention plans, etc.) and the experiences of the national and local change facilitators were considered by the National Steering Committee. After several discussions they came to the conclusion that information about the way schools prepare themselves for the mobilisation for the R.P.S. and about the activities and problems during the first and second (implementation) year would be very useful. So, the second evaluation study is designed to make an inventory of factors (variables) important during the mobilisation stage and the first and second year of the project.

We started from the general assumption that local schools, which are confronted with a large-scale innovation project (see 1) and with aims formulated in general (and vague) terms will develop an "organizational reaction". In other words : a local school will develop a "local innovation policy". The nature and the quality of this local innovation policy will differ from one school to another.

In more general (research) terms: we were interested in the relationship between a local innovation policy and the degree of implementation of the

general aims of the R.P.S. (see 1). Both elements of this research question (local innovation policy - degree of implementation) should be further explored and operationalized.

3.1. Project outline

Having in mind the general research question, from October until December 1981, the research team has built up a theoretical framework (described in a first interim report, November 1982). During the next stage, that theoretical framework was used as a basis for the development of a semi-structured interview (see 3.2.).

This theoretical framework is based first on the result of a detailed review of the literature (especially review articles). We explicitly wanted to use the existing empirical and conceptual work as an orienting frame. Second, we constructed a written questionnaire for the national and local change facilitators aimed at the discovery of factors, which, according to their experiences, play an important role. Third, some of the assumptions about important factors during the mobilisation stage, have been verified and differentiated during open and exploratory interviews in six schools (with the principals, with 2 or 3 teachers and with the remedial teachers).

The end result of the foregoing three steps can be summarised as follows. We made a distinction between :

- factors with regard to the national innovation policy (we took into consideration the features of the RPS, as described in 1);
- factors with regard to the innovation (characteristics);
- factors with regard to the individual teachers;
- factors with regard to the school (as an organisation);
- factors with regard to the interventions used by the change facilitators.

To put it in more conceptual terms, activities and problems during the mobilisation stage and during the first years of implementation are conceived as transformations which are the result of reciprocal influences among users, innovation demands or characteristics, the institution, the general innovation policy and the characteristics of the support structure.

Taking that conceptual framework into consideration, one could say that the main objective of the evaluation is to clarify the process of transformations and to give as concrete as possible a description of the crucial

factors which lead to a local innovation policy. This is not only important from a theoretical point of view (or for those who are interested in research questions), but also for policy makers and consultants who are responsible for the further development of a broad scale innovation project.

3.2. The interview

Using the main research question and the conceptual framework as a general background, a semi-structured interview was developed.

A first draft of that interview was tried out in six schools (33 interviewees). From the beginning, we decided that the interviewers were free to change the sequence of the questions, to shop around with the schedule or to put it aside when informants went off in promising directions.

After this try-out, the interviewers (who are the six members of the research team) came together in order to discuss their experiences. The main results were summarised and ideas about more compelling or promising ways to look at the phenomena were studied. All changes and decisions have been reported in internal interim reports. This is not only important information to use for the end (external) report; the choice of some specific questions (even if the interviewer is free to rephrase the questions during the interview) is a first step in the data reduction process.

The interview, which was used, consists of five parts.

- Part I is related to the activities which took place during the mobilisation stage (who spoke first about the R.P.S.; who took the first initiatives; can you tell something about informal talks and formal meetings; did you visit other schools; etc. ?).

  The schools which started the project, had to fill out an official form. So, we asked teachers (and the principal) about the procedures followed by the school (or some members of the staff) related to that official form.

  A third group of questions of part one is related to the way the school has built up their local curriculum (a description of the main objectives to be achieved during the next school year; it is a kind of a local

agenda of activities for that particular school). We were especially interested in the way (process) the team has made the decisions about the local curriculum.

- The (three) questions of Part II are related to the expectations the school had (at the very beginning of the implementation) towards the local change facilitators. We also wanted to know if the change facilitators had specified their expectations and goals they wanted to achieve with the local team.

  (Now, we know that the amount of useful information related to these questions, is very small. The interviewers had the feeling that teachers and principals did not expect questions about mutual expectations.)

- Part III contains the implementation questions. That means we wanted to know, as concretely as possible, what changes have been achieved in the classrooms and in the school. The teachers (the regular teachers and the remedial teachers) and the principal received a week before the interview a letter with the question to prepare for themselves an inventory with all the concrete changes they have made in their classroom (teachers) or in their school (principals). During the interviews the interviewers tried to get very detailed description of the changes; they also tried to gather information about the frequency with which the so-called new activities took place (example : once in a week pupils from the third year of the nursery school have a common activity with the first year of the elementary school). And for every "new" activity the teachers and the principal described, we asked them to indicate the degree of difference from the situation before they started with the R.P.S. (1 : very little difference - 4 : very much difference).

  With these questions, we intended to collect information about the actual new activities, their frequence and the (perceived) degree of novelty.

- In Part IV of the interview we have brought together 24 statements, which can be seen as the operationalization of influencing factors (see : 3.1.). We asked the teachers to react and to give their opinion about the statements.

  Some examples :

the daily classroom work.

- At this moment I get sufficient support from the change facilitators.
- The implementation of the R.P.S. implies change in the existing values, the norm structure and in the attitudes of the individual teacher.

- We have well-planned meetings during which we discuss and evaluate our experiences and problems.

- The principal in our school stimulates the implementation of the R.P.S.

- I feel supported by the parents of my pupils.

- I fully agree with the main goals of the R.P.S.

- etc.

The 24 statements were reformulated for the interview of the principals.

- We ended the interview (Part V) with a general question : what would you say to your colleague (teacher or principal) who has the intention to start next year with the implementation of the R.P.S. ?

(In general they answer : take it easy; it is not that difficult; talk about your experiences; it's fun; the changes will be minimal; etc.)

The principal, three or four teachers (one of the kindergarten and two or three teachers of the elementary school) and the remedial teacher of 24 schools were interviewed.

A first interim report (November 1982) consisted of the detailed description of the mobilisation and implementation stage of four schools. The first analysis of the interviews led to methodological problems and issues of qualitative research.

The first analysis experiences had led to a number of new decisions about the way we should handle qualitative data. A manual with coding and decisions rules was written and used for the analysis of the interviews of eight schools. In a second interim report (August 1983) we presented the results of this analysis.

The final report was presented to the National Steering Committee in January 1985. It contains the description of the local innovation policy of the 24 schools and an answer to the question of what the relationship is between this policy and the level of implementation. What follows is based on the final report.

4. Local innovation policy and level of implementation

4.1. Analysis of the interviews

All interviews with the staff of the 24 schools were audio-taped and written out in full. This led to an overwhelming number of pages with qualitative information. After several try-outs and especially using the experiences of the first and the second analysis of some interviews (see the first and the second interim report) we developed a detailed manual which enabled the researchers to summarize the interview information in a standardized way using 86 "analysis tables". In these tables the information is summarized using some symbols, words and short phrases (2).

These "reduced" data were used for the description of the local innovation policy and for the measurement of the level of implementation.

4.2. Local innovation policy or five important variables

After several try-outs, discussions among the research staff and a second analysis of the interim reports, we were able to "construct" five variables which were considered as an operationalizatior of a local innovation policy.

First, we will present briefly these five variables and explain how we "constructed" the variables (4.2.1.). Second we will describe the four types of local innovation policies we distinguished using the available data (4.2.2.).

4.2.1. Construction of five variables

The five variables can be described in a general way as follows :

- purposeful coordination of implementation activities via planning. First, we were interested in questions such as : is there a person (or more persons) in the school who has a clear idea about the objectives the school wants to implement ? Can we indentify a person who is responsible for vision-building ? A second important issue related to this first variable concerns the existence (or absence) of a series of activities which can be

considered as indications of a more or less systematic planning of the implementation activities;

- structural information channels. Using the available data (organized in the 86 analysis tables) we identified clear indications concerning the existence (or absence) of activities by which all staff members are informed about the decisions made during meetings, about the inservice-activities for the whole staff or for some subgroups, about the planning of the next steps, about the results of an internal evaluation, etc.;

- professional relationships among the staff. Professional contacts among teachers (and teachers and the principal) are defined as regular (more or less planned) contacts during which several different professional issues and problems are discussed and solved. These professional contacts have as a result that most teachers know what's going on in the different classrooms;

- school-specific character of the implementation(-proces). This was the most difficult variable to define, but also the most interesting. The degree to which a school has adapted the (bundle of) innovation to the local situation is the general issue underlying this variables. This general issue has been translated into the following more concrete questions : are the implementation activities based on a systematic diagnosis; do we find indications for the existence of a systematic and ongoing evaluation; do the evaluation results lead to adaptations; do the staff members have a clear idea and feeling about their (new) tasks; do the staff members have clear expectations about the support of the external change facilitators ?

- information activities during the mobilization stage. Here we were mainly interested in two activities. First : what kind of activities were organized during the preparation year in order to inform the staff about the R.P.S. (activities such as : discussions during staff meetings; dissemination of printed materials; organization of a discussion with teachers from a R.P.S.; organization of a visit to a R.P.S., discussions with parents, etc...). Second we were interested also in activities which created possibilities for a cognitive elaboration and evaluation of the information.

These five variables, considered as the operationalization of the local

order to enhance the possibility to compare (and to group) schools two sets of decisions were made before the actual analysis started. The first set of decisions concerned the relationship between the variables and some specific analysis tables. In other words : the information necessary for the description of variables 1 in school a can be found in some specific tables. So, for each of the five variables we indicated that some specific tables contain the relevant information. The second set of decisions was related to the way the conclusions about the five variables should be formulated. The specifications of these rules (or decisions) led to standardized descriptions and conclusions about the variables for each school.

After we analysed the relation between the degree of implementation (see 4.3.) and the information about the five variables, we made a kind of a qualitative meta-analysis. This meta-analysis led to the formulation of four types of local innovation policy (3).

4.2.2. Four types of local innovation policy

The four types of local innovation policy are described in two different ways. First, we give a very concise description of the most typical characterictics of each type. Second, we present the policy in a graphic way using the five variables as a framework. In this second presentation we also relate the innovation policy to the degree of implementation.

- Local innovation policy characterized by planning

Most of the efforts - of the principal as well as the teachers - are aimed at the implementation of innovations in the classroom with the purpose of improving the existing teaching practice. These efforts are coordinated by means of a plan, wherein a number of concrete indications for changes in teaching practice are pointed out.
This policy leads to many of changes in classroom practice in a relatively short time.

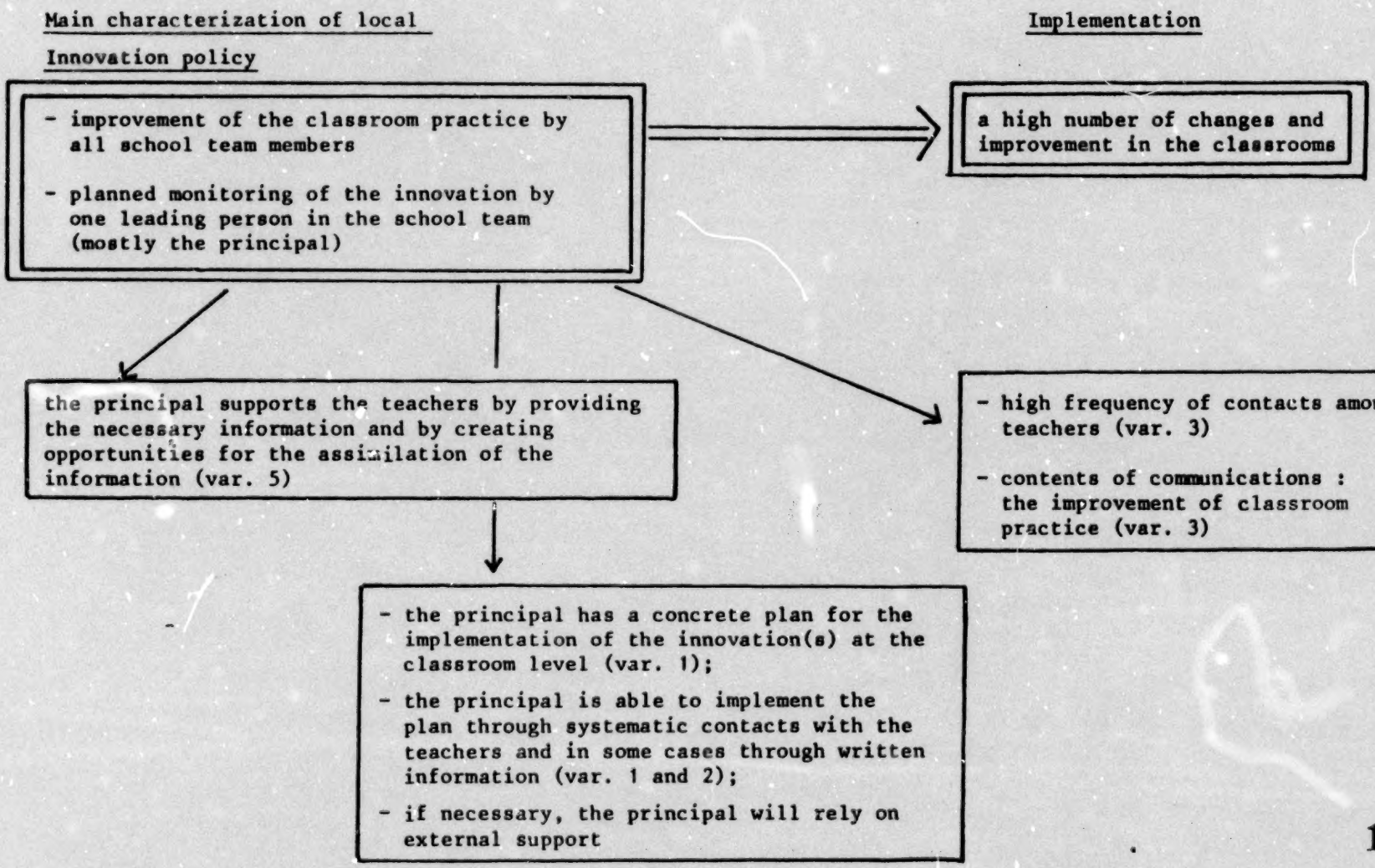
By passing on information about innovations and frequent discussions about this information, the principal makes the teaching staff aware of the development she/he prefers. The principal communicates systematically and frequently with the teachers about the plan he/she has in mind and about the changes he/she would like to implement. Thus he/she succeeds in introducing his/her plan to the teachers and by doing so he/she makes clear his/her expectations about the needed changes in the classroom. This

systematic communication occurs during staff meetings and/or during informal conversations, for instance during a classroom visit.
It often occurs that the plan and agreements with respect to the implementation of changes are written down. Through these documents every staff member gets information about the evoluation of the innovation process and about the concrete innovative attempts in the school. These documents can also be regarded upon as a directive for the own classroom practice.

The teachers are frequently in touch with each other, not only at meetings organized by the principal, but also during other (informal) meetings. During these meetings they usually talk about improvement of classroom practice.

Whenever the principal thinks that an external change facilitator is an expert on a specific innovation topic, he/she invites him.

Fig. 2 : Local innovation policy characterized by PLANNING

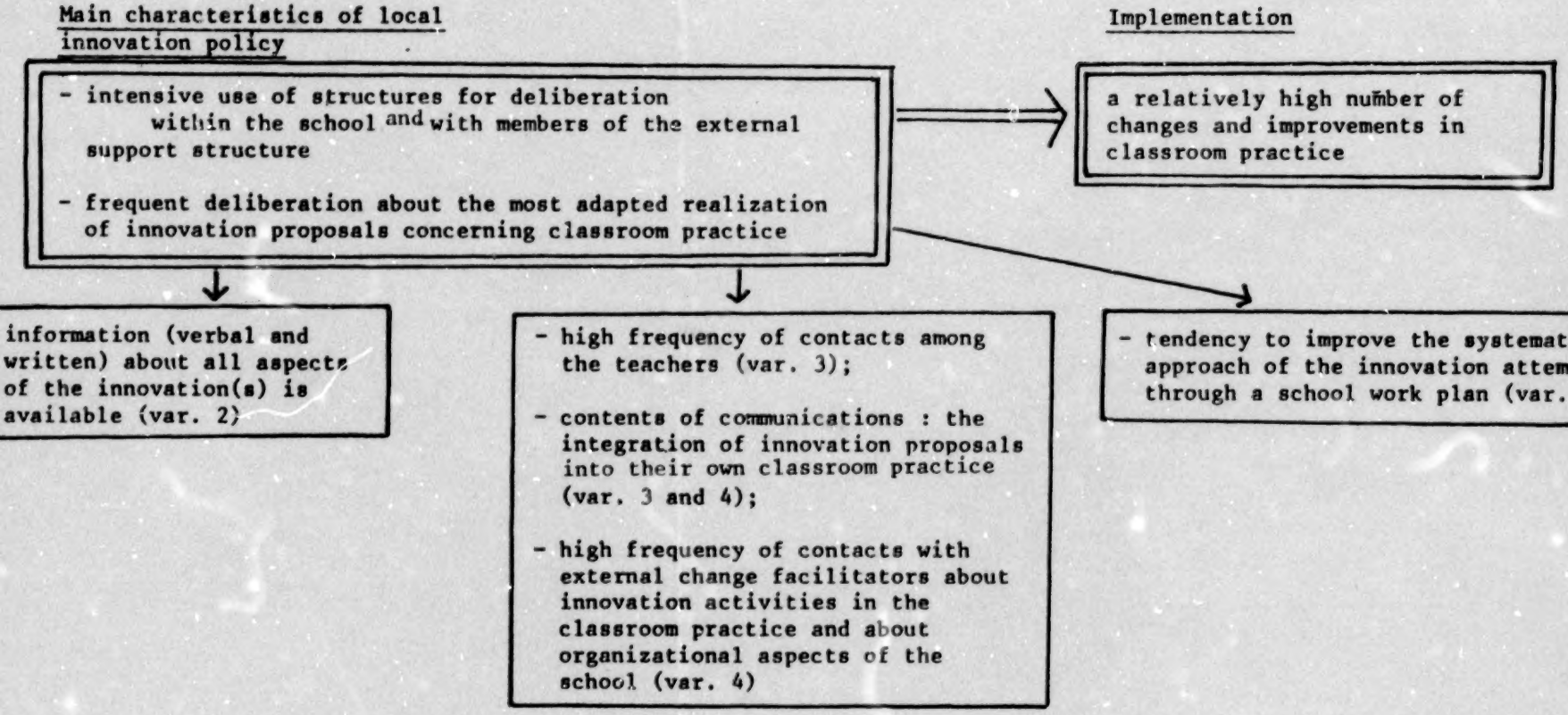

Main characterization of local Innovation policy
Implementation
- improvement of the classroom practice by all school team members
- planned monitoring of the innovation by one leading person in the school team (mostly the principal)
a high number of changes and improvement in the classrooms
the principal supports the teachers by providing the necessary information and by creating opportunities for the assimilation of the information (var. 5)
- high frequency of contacts among teachers (var. 3)
- contents of communications : the improvement of classroom practice (var. 3)
- the principal has a concrete plan for the implementation of the innovation(s) at the classroom level (var. 1);
- the principal is able to implement the plan through systematic contacts with the teachers and in some cases through written information (var. 1 and 2);
- if necessary, the principal will rely on external support

- Local innovation policy characterized by interaction

The way in which a number of schools react when confronted with an innovation bundle, i.e. the Renewed Primary School, can best be described as a process of systematic interaction. Frequent deliberation and consultation are observed in these schools, within the school team and between the team and external change facilitators. In order to provide systematic deliberation and to involve all school team members, these schools make intensive use of deliberation structures and written information channels. This way of exploring the innovation(s) leads in a relatively short time to many changes in classroom practice.

During these frequent meetings of school team members, either in subgroups, or with the whole staff, the attention is primarily drawn to the comparison of innovation propositions (goals as well as concrete activities) and their own concerns and possibilities. When a decision about a specific activity has been reached, the team will monitor the implementation through frequent evaluation sessions and will make the necessary adjustments.
External change facilitators follow the evolution very closely by means of frequent presence in the schools. They not only support the teachers in their effort to improve classroom practice, but they also offer a school-focused support. In other words, changes are integrated at the classroom level, but also at the school level through frequent contacts between the school staff and the external support structure.

Fig. 3 : Local innovation policy characterized by INTERACTION


Main characteristics of local innovation policy
- intensive use of structures for deliberation within the school and with members of the external support structure
- frequent deliberation about the most adapted realization of innovation proposals concerning classroom practice
Implementation
a relatively high number of changes and improvements in classroom practice
information (verbal and written) about all aspects of the innovation(s) is available (var. 2)
- high frequency of contacts among the teachers (var. 3);
- contents of communications : the integration of innovation proposals into their own classroom practice (var. 3 and 4);
- high frequency of contacts with external change facilitators about innovation activities in the classroom practice and about organizational aspects of the school (var. 4)
- tendency to improve the systematic approach of the innovation attempt through a school work plan (var. 1)

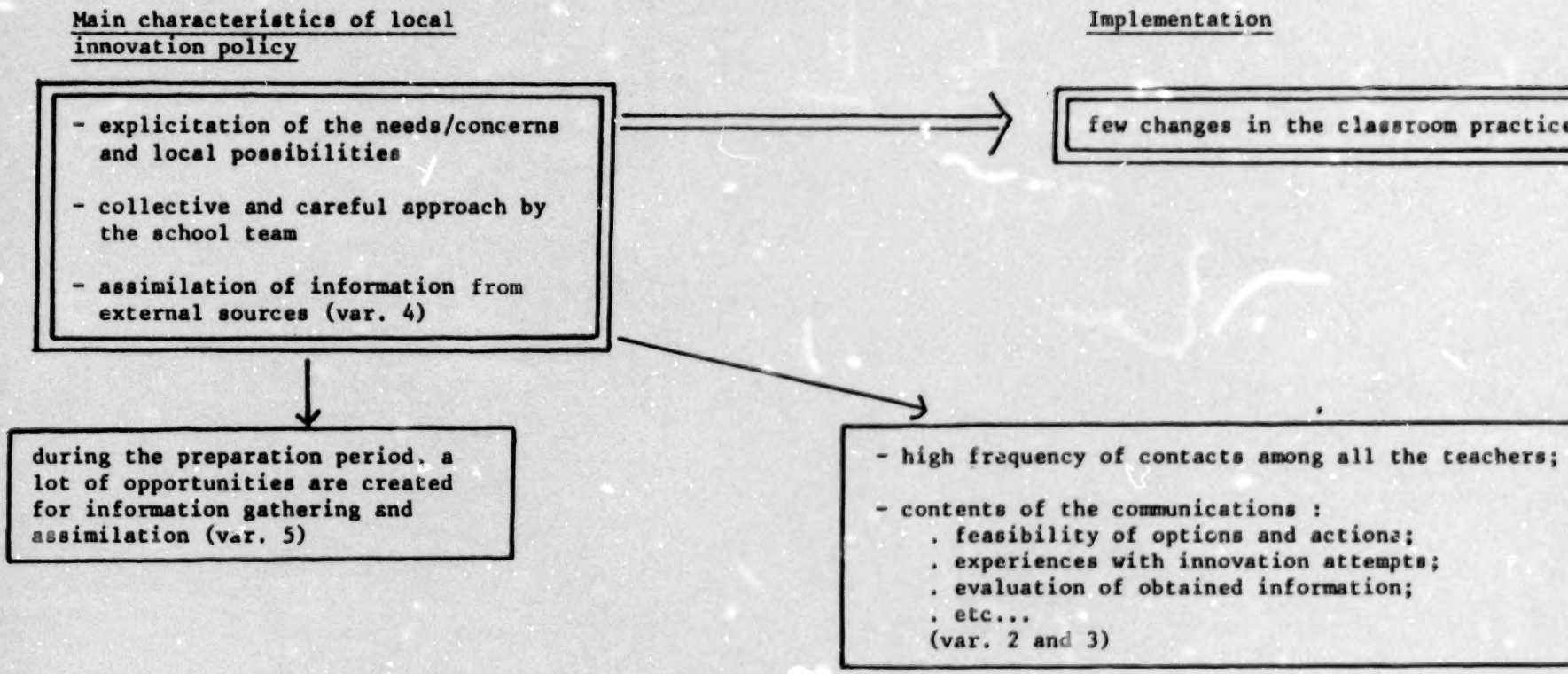
- Local innovation policy characterized by risk avoidance

The innovation policy of a number of schools can be concisely characterized as a slow, steady and careful approach in order to engage all team members in the innovation attempts. This policy leads - at least in the first year of the implementation phase - to only a few changes in the classroom practice.

The school team pays a lot of attention to the explicitation of these issues in the classroom and school life wherein teachers experience deficiencies. They search for an adapted answer to these problems in terms of innovation attempts that everybody consider as realizable in their own school situation. Typical is a serious attempt to minimize the risks by involving everybody from the beginning in the search process and by keeping everybody well informed before taking concrete steps.

Such a process of intensive deliberation demands much time and supposes frequent contact among the school team members. They carefully discuss everything : which direction to follow, how to translate the official aims of the R.P.S. into concrete instructional activities taking into consideration their own history and possibilities. And also after having tried out a new activity, they exchange their experiences and decide in a collaborative way about the next steps to be taken.

A last characteristic of this type of local innovation policy is the assimilation of information coming from external sources. During the initiation period, after joining the innovation project, the school initiates a search for information and opens all doors for information offered by others. The assimilation of the information is done by all school team members with the purpose of creating an adapted and collectively accepted attitude towards the innovation(s).


Main characteristics of local innovation policy
Implementation
- explicitation of the needs/concerns and local possibilities
- collective and careful approach by the school team
- assimilation of information from external sources (var. 4)
few changes in the classroom practice
during the preparation period, a lot of opportunities are created for information gathering and assimilation (var. 5)
- high frequency of contacts among all the teachers;
- contents of the communications :
. feasibility of options and actions;
. experiences with innovation attempts;
. evaluation of obtained information;
. etc...
(var. 2 and 3)

- Local innovation policy characterized by cooptation

Most concrete changes in the classroom as well as some changes in the internal organization of the school are initiated and supported by an external change facilitator. The school develops no collective attitude toward these changes or toward the innovation project. This kind of reaction to the innovation bundle can lead rather quickly, to many small changes as well as to few changes in the classrooms.

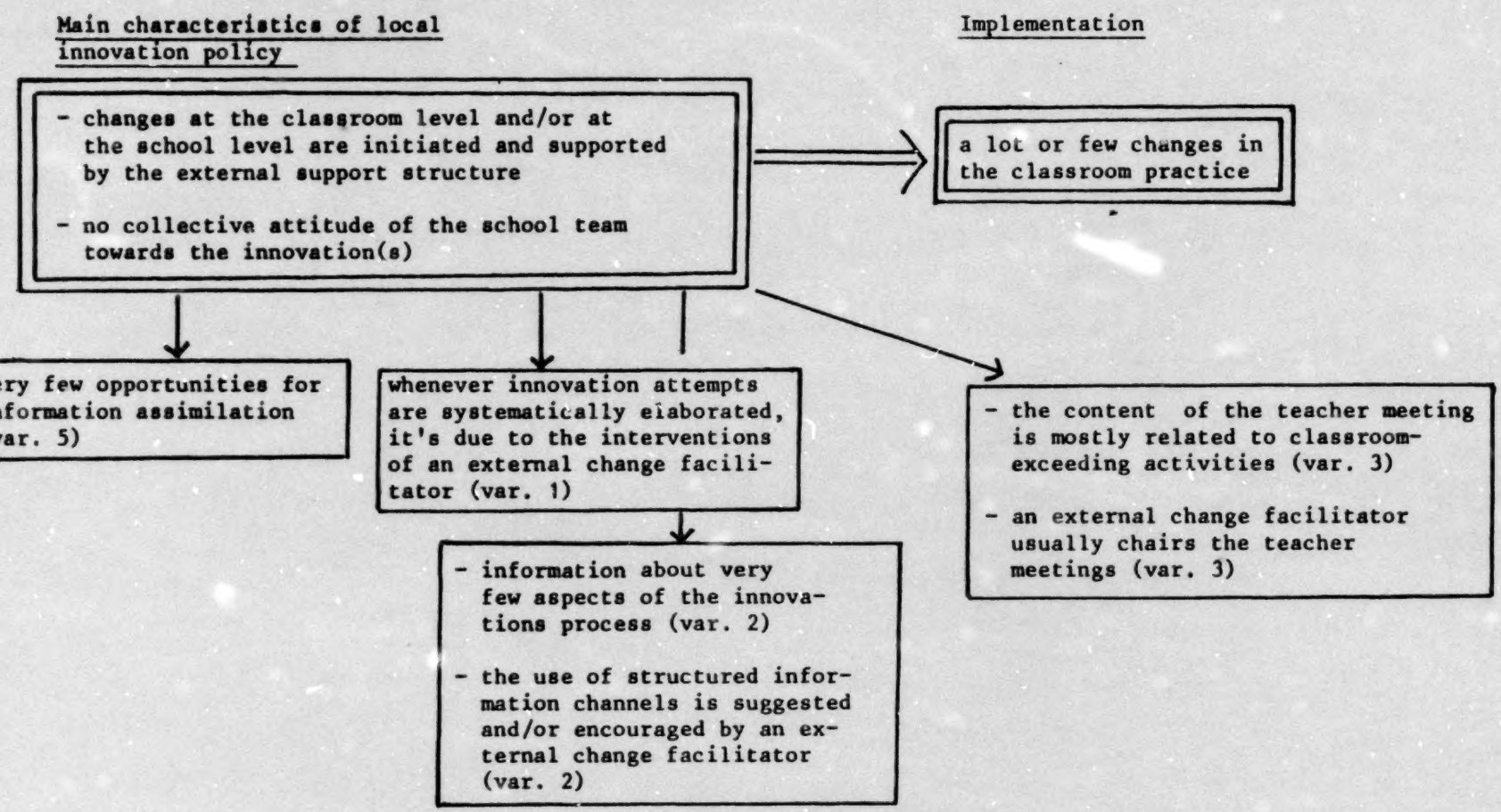
An external change facilitator strives to establish a systematic support of innovation attempts within the school. He/she organizes and supports the definition of innovation objectives and the selection of concrete innovative attempts. Also the elaboration and implementation of these activities and the follow-up of these concrete realizations in the classroom is monitored by an external change facilitator.

The school team doesn't build up an organizational structure aimed at the stimulation of the local innovation process.

The staff does not take the responsibility for their own development. The school team members discuss the innovation(s) and their innovative efforts very infrequently. They talk to each other when it is really needed for the realization of a specific innovation, such as for classroom-exceeding activities, where concrete appointments are necessary. Other efforts or aspects of the innovation(s) are only seldom the subject of their conversation. For instance, information about the innovation is almost never discussed within the school team. Meetings of the school staff about the innovation process in their school are often chaired by or in presence of an external change facilitator.

Only little attention is paid to keeping all school team members informed about the evolution of the innovation process. And only a small amount of information is disseminated through information structures. Either people keep each other informed about part of their innovative activities, or they give information about their innovation efforts but these data only cover practical organizational issues. It is often suggested and encouraged by an external change facilitator that structured information channels should be used.

Fig. 5 : Local innovation policy characterized by cooperation


Main characteristics of local innovation policy
Implementation
- changes at the classroom level and/or at the school level are initiated and supported by the external support structure
- no collective attitude of the school team towards the innovation(s)
a lot or few changes in the classroom practice
ery few opportunities for information assimilation (var. 5)
whenever innovation attempts are systematically elaborated, it's due to the interventions of an external change facilitator (var. 1)
- information about very few aspects of the innovations process (var. 2)
- the use of structured information channels is suggested and/or encouraged by an external change facilitator (var. 2)
- the content of the teacher meeting is mostly related to classroom-exceeding activities (var. 3)
- an external change facilitator usually chairs the teacher meetings (var. 3)

4.3. Implementation level

In 1.1. the R.P.S. has been characterized as a "bundle of innovations". Looking for the degree or level of implementation of a number of different innovations is a complicated matter.

First, we will describe some of the principles and rules underlying the approach we developed for the measurement of the implementation level. Second, we will present the most important results.

It's important to emphasize the fact that the determination of the implementation is based on interviews with teachers. During these interviews, we tried to get clear and useful information about their actual teaching activities (see 3.2.).

4.3.1. The aims of the R.P.S. and the actual innovative activities in the schools

In 1.1. we presented the "official" aims of the R.P.S. But, from the first interview, it became obvious that teachers don't talk about the R.P.S. using the official wording of the aims. They mostly talk about concrete teaching activities, perceived by them as typical for or as a result of the introduction of the R.P.S. in their school. We decided to use these concrete answers for the determination of the implementation level.

During the analysis of the interviews we tried as far as possible to order all the teaching activities reported by the teachers under the headings of the official aims. In other words we tried to reconcile the teaching activities described by the teachers to the "official" aims of the R.P.S. This rule made it possible to use almost all the activities described and discussed during the interview with the teachers .

A first inventory of all these teaching activities resulted in a long heterogeneous list. In order to grasp this diversity, we defined for each of the general aims, typical activities. Each activity is defined very concretely. In other words, using the interview data on the one hand and taking into consideration the general aims of the R.P.S., a well defined analysis scheme was developed. This analysis scheme contains a general formulation of the aims, a definition of activities typical for each aim and also a list of analysis rules. These last rules are the result of several try-outs. They explain what kind of information (out of the interview) is important for the determination of the implementation level, how

to organize the data, and especially how one can assess the degree of implementation.

Some examples will make clear the process of analysis as well as the assessment of the level of implementation. In the manual developed for the measurement of the implementation, the five official goals of the R.P.S." are defined by the research staff as follows :

- integration : activities aimed at the mitigation of the barriers between the different grades;
- individualized teaching : activities aimed at the implementation of teaching strategies which take into consideration differences among pupils;
- promotion of a school communicity : activities aimed at the promotion of collaboration among pupils from different grades;
- child-centered education : activities by which the pupils have the opportunity to influence the teaching-learning process;
- full development of all capabilities : activities aimed at the promotion of non-cognitive capabilities of every pupil.

As already indicated every aim has been further elaborated by indicating "typical activities". Thus, for the general aim "integration" we distinguished two categories :

- category a : contacts among a teacher and pupils who will attend his/her class next year;
- category b : activities which have as a result that information about pupils is transferred from one teacher to another one.

In the manual, each category is illustrated by several examples.

Besides providing a general definition of the aims, the clarification of the aims by typical activities (and typical illustrations), we also developed a rating system which enabled us to assess the degree of implementation. We used a four-points scale : 0, 1, 2, 3. Each point has been defined as concrete as possible. This gave us the opportunity to define an inter-scorer reliability (5).

For example, as far as the aim "promotion of a school community" is concerned we developed the following rating-scale :

3 : collaboration among pupils of different grades at least 14 times during two trimesters;

2 : collaboration among pupils of different grades at least 8 times during two trimesters;

1 : collaboration among pupils of different grades at least 4 times during two trimesters;

0 : no collaboration;
or : less than 4 times during two trimesters.

Using this procedure, we were able to asses the degree of implementation for every single teacher. These assessments have been aggregated for the school.

In a next step, we developed a procedure which led to the distinction of five groups of schools (6) :

- group 1 : high implementation level for 4 or 5 aims (7 schools);
- group 2 : high implementation level for 3 aims (6 schools)
- group 3 : high implementation level for 2 amims (3 schools)
- group 4 : high implementation level for 1 aim (4 schools)
- group 5 : no aim implemented on a high level (4 schools)

"High level" means here that at least 25 % of the teachers get a "3" on the implementation scale and another 25 % of the teachers get a "2" or "1".

4.3.2. Implementation level and local innovation policy

As we already pointed out, one of the main research question concerns the relation between the implementation level and the local innovation policy. Taking into consideration the elaboration of four types of local innovation policy, the question should be read as : what's the relation between the implementation level and the type of local innovation policy.

The results are summarized in figure 6.

Fig. 6 Type of local innovation policy and level of implementation°

Type Local Inn. Policy						
PLANNING	Schools	103*	105	106	305	306
	Implementation Group	1	1	1	1	3
INTERACTION	Schools	202	203	310		
	Implementation Group	2	3	1		
RISK AVOIDANCE	Schools	206	302	311	312	
	Implementation Group	5	4	4	5	
COOPTATION	Schools	101	201	204	205	307	308
	Implementation Group	1	2	5	2	5	4

* Identification number

° It was not possible to determine in an acceptable and valid way the type of local innovation policy for six schools.

From figure 6 we learn that there is, to some extent a relation between the implementation level and the type of local innovation policy. But it's clear that the implementation level is also determined by other factors.
In other words : the type of local innovation policy, as it is defined and operationalized in this study, cannot fully explain the implementation level. This is especially obvious for the local policy characterized by co-optation.
Nevertheless, looking for a typical organizational answer (a local innovation policy) developed by schools which have to implement a large-scale innovation, is a promising activity.

And taking into consideration the purpose of this paper, it's even more important to wonder if a local innovation policy develops very early in the implementation process (an early institutionalization of the local policy)? And in case of an early stable institutionalization of the local policy, what's the influence on the implementation level ? And as a correlate of the last question : what's the relation between a continuous developing local policy and the implementation level ?

For a first exploration of this and other questions, we went back to three schools. We tried to find out to what extent the local innovation policy had changed and how it relates to the implementation level (see 5).

5. Institutionalization of local innovation policy

5.1. Follow-up interview : aims and design

For the follow-up we selected three schools which differ from each other in both local innovation policy and implementation level (see fig. 7). Taking into consideration the issue of "institutionalization", we were interested in two research questions. The first question related to the implementation level. Specifically we looked for activities and some developments which indicated an increase or decrease of the implementation level. In order to find these indications, we developed a short interview (with less questions compared with the 1981-interview) for the teachers and the principal. The interview questions were selected from the "manual" for the determination of the implementation level (see 4.3.1.).

The second question concerned the local innovation policy. Here we especially were interested in changes in this policy. In other words : were

there some indications which lead to the conclusion that the local innovation policy had changed in one or another way. This second question is an important one, because the schools were in 1982 still in the beginning of the implementation process. The assumption was that between 1982 and 1985 there would be a development in or a rearrangement of the local innovation policy. In other words : is a school able to develop a policy taking into consideration the objectives of the R.P.S., the implementation experiences, the reactions of parents, the changes in the external support strategy, etc... ? We explored these questions during the interview with the principal.

Before we visited the school we studied intensively the three "dossiers", analyzed the summaries as we find them in the final report and formulated some expectations (see 5.2) (4).

The three schools involved in the follow-up are presented in figure 7.

Fig. 7 : Some characteristics of the three follow-up schools

School	Implementation* level	Local innovation policy*	Number of teachers	Number of teachers interviewed	
				First interv. (april 1982)	Second interv. (april 1985)
School A**	group 1	planning	19	5	5
School B	group 4	risk avoidance	14	5	4
School C	group 3	planning	10	5	5

* Based on the first interview.

** In school A the principal is new since december 1983 (a former grade 5 teacher).

5.2. Description of the three schools

The presentation of the main data is organized into three steps. First, a summary of the data from each school is given. This summary is based on the final report (January 1985). In this description one will find information about the five variables presented in 4.2.

Second, we present our expectations. These expectations are based on an analysis of the available data (first interview). To some extent these expectations have influenced some questions of the second interview. We found it important to have these expectations and related questions in mind during the second interview. We assumed, that the extent to which these expectations seem to be correct, is an indication of the validity of the description of the schools (based on the first interview).

Third, we will summarize the findings of the second interview. The two questions - which were considered as the main aims of the follow-up (5.1) - will be answered.

5.2.1. School A

F i r s t i n t e r v i e w

1. Preparation/mobilization

In this school, it's obvious that the principal has taken the initiative to start with the R.P.S.-project. She collected the necessary information and organized in the school several initiation activities of a different nature. Right from the beginning, the principal developed a game plan for her school and also a school work plan. During the first interview, the teachers made clear that they have been involved in the first discussions about the R.P.S. and in the decisions about concrete developmental activities. They also emphasized the fact that a lot of innovative proposals were compatible with the situation in their school.
So, it was easy for them to understand the aims of the R.P.S.

2. Planning/dissemination of information

During the first as well as during the second year, the principal developed a well structured implementation plan, in collaboration with the teachers. The teaching activities, related to the implementation of the main goals of the R.P.S., were discussed and written out in a report. There were clear

agreements about which teachers would try out some activities. In contrast with the concrete planning, there was a lack of systematic evaluation.

All staff members were informed (by a written report) about the innovative activities going on in the different classrooms. They also were informed about the inservice activities followed by the principal or by a subgroup of the staff.

3. Professional contacts

There were clear indications about the existence of formal and informal professional contacts among staff members. These contacts are not limited to a verbal communication, to agreements of a practical nature, to collaborative preparation of some activities, but there are also indications of dissemination of teaching material among teachers.

4. School-specific character

The analysis of the data of the first interview did not lead to the conclusion that the implementation process can be considered as school-specific. Although from a second and more detailed analysis of the preparation/initiation activities, we know that in school A there were already developed some activities which can be characterized as typical for a R.P.S.-school. In other words, the existing situation in school A was very favourable. That's probably the reason why we didn't find specific indications which led to a positive answer to the question about the school-specific character of the implementation process.

E x p e c t a t i o n s

Based on the available data, we formulated three expectations. During the preparation of the second interview these expectations were operationalized into more specific questions.

1. The favourable situation prior to the implementation, the teachers' positive attitude and the planning by the principal, will in 1985 result in an implementation level which will be at least at the same level as in 1982.

2. The new principal will probably support the implementation activities in the same way as the 1982 principal. Or stated in another way, a different

approach by the new principal will probably not have a negative influence on the implementation process.

3. Teachers were involved in the first discussion about the R.P.S., they have had the opportunity to deliberate about the innovations, they were informed about the activities organized by their colleagues. These findings will lead to indications about the existence of mutual support among the teachers and a high degree of commitment.

S e c o n d i n t e r v i e w

1. Implementation level

The analysis of the second interviews with the principal and the same five teachers (as in 1982) has made very clear that the implementation of the main goals of the R.P.S. is indeed at least at the same level as in 1982. The nature as well as the frequency of innovative activities allowed us to conclude that "group 1" as an indication for the implementation level is still appropriate.

Besides that there are a number of indications that the teachers are developing interesting activities as far as individualized teaching is concerned, that the collaboration with the parents is improved and that the principal has some clear plans for the near future.

Related to the implementation level, it is important to underline the fact that the principal gave a very concrete and systematic overview of the innovative activities going on in her school. During the interview, she regularly indicated that some activities can indeed be considered the result of the R.P.S.-project.

2. Local innovation policy

The observation that the nature and the quality of the local innovation policy didn't change along with the new principal is one of the most important findings of the follow-up interview. The principal explained that she supports the implementation process in the same way and from the same point of view as her predecessor. This is echoed by the teachers, who added also that their relationship with the principal is now more open than in 1982 and also that they have a wide range of opportunities to explain their own ideas.

The principal explained that she has a general plan and strategy in mind, but that she especially emphasises in discussions and meetings with the teachers the short time planning.
She doesn't find it important to write down the plans, but considers ongoing verbal communication more important. In order to enhance the verbal communications, she creates a lot of opportunities (from 8 till 8.30 a.m.; during lunch time).
The five interviewed teachers certified that as long as they are in school A, the contacts among the staff have always been supportive. They also made it clear that during the last two years they have had a very fruitful professional relationship.

We asked the principal and also the teacher to explain the way the R.P.S. is implemented in their school. It's important to observe that all of them pointed out the same factors; the approach of the former principal; the clear expectations from the new principal ("my teachers know that they have to work very hard"); the positive contacts among teachers and especially the opportunity to organize their school in-service activities around some professional issues and problems chosen by the teachers themselves. In most cases, the principal chairs these activities.

At last, it's important to underline the fact that school A makes maximum use of the external support, but in a way determined by the teachers.

5.2.2. School B

F i r s t i n t e r v i e w

1. Preparation/mobilization

The teachers explained that they were fairly well informed about the R.P.S. They received written information and during staff meetings they had the opportunity to discuss the aims of the R.P.S. The teachers especially appreciated the slow evolution toward the final participation decision.
Nevertheless, they indicated some "pragmatic" reasons for the participation of the school. Some teachers explicitly indicated that most teachers were prepared to start the project but with a low degree of enthusiasm. Further they hoped that just by initiating the project in their school some of basic assumptions and expectation would become more clear.

2. Planning/dissemination of information

Analysis of the first interviews led to the conclusion that there were no indications of a purposeful coordination of implementation activities via planning. There was also a lack of systematic dissemination of information.

3. Professional contacts

There was evidence about the existence of more or less developed professional contacts. During these contacts, teachers discuss what they are trying in their classrooms. But a more detailed analysis of the interviews, revealed that teachers talked about plans, intentions, etc... In general, it was clear that teachers talked about the R.P.S. in rather general terms and that they especially emphasized the importance of striving towards an implementation of the goals of the R.P.S. in a way adapted to their school (see also 4).

4. School-specific character

There are a lot of clear indications for the school-specific character of the implementation process. The school and the teachers wanted to implement the R.P.S. taking into consideration the specific ideas and experiences of the teachers, the expectations of parents and other participants and the innovation history of the school. A lot of specific indications for this school-specific character were evident in long and ongoing discussions about general ideas; ongoing evaluation of several concrete proposals and activities; collecting more information about the R.P.S., etc... There is a critical and independent attitude towards external resources. All teachers emphasized the importance of a gradual and cautious development of the school. Related to this, they also underlined the necessity of an attitude change. This change concerns the relationship among teachers on the one hand and among teachers and pupils on the other hand.

E x p e c t a t i o n s

1. A lack of planning will lead to the same implementation level as in 1982.

2. The principal as well as the teachers will attach great importance to innovations which are visible for parents, the inspectors, etc... In other words : such innovations as the organization of a parent committee, the organization of art activities, etc... will be welcomed.

3. The staff will underline the importance of maintaining "rest" and a "good spirit". Proposals which can disturbe the rest and the good spirit will be avoided.

4. The principal is a "responder". His proposals and activities are determined to some extent by the teachers' reactions. He will call on an external change facilitator for the organization of in-service activities in his school.

S e c o n d i n t e r v i e w

1. Implementation level

We learned from the interviews with the teachers, and especially from the answers concerning concrete innovative activities in the classrooms, that there is no increase as far as the implementation level is concerned. The remedial teacher explicitly stated that the R.P.S. didn't lead to changes in his remedial activities. He also underlined the observation that his activities don't effect the teaching activities going on in the regular classrooms. One teacher (grade 5) explained that from time to time he has tried to implement some suggestions (related to individualized reading) presented during the in-service training sessions. But he characterized these efforts as minimal. Another teacher (grade 1) pointed out one positive effect of the R.P.S.-approach, she finds herself more relaxed and feels that she has chances now to teach in a more informal way, as compared with some years ago.

All teachers echoed the principal's ideas about the innovation process; the introduction of an innovation is above all a matter of changes in attitudes ("mentality"). So, "don't hurry and take it easy" ! Asked for activities they would like to organize in the near future (in their classrooms or in the school), we got two answers of a very different nature. One : let's go on as we are now. Second : "I would like to organize a musical in our school and invite parents to collaborate" (principal) and "I assume we will invite an expert to explore the problems about number concept" (all teachers). This last suggestion is clearly the result of a discussion among the teacher during a preceeding staff meeting.

2. Local innovation policy

Right from the beginning of the interview (with the principal) it was obvious that the local innovation policy didn't change at all. The

principal immediately underlined his assumption that R.P.S. in his school is a matter of changes in the "mentality". Asked for a further explanation, he stated that the principal is in fact dependent of the good will of the teachers. Besides that, he wanted to improve the collaboration among teachers.

It's very remarkable that the principal didn't describe the R.P.S. in terms of changes in the classroom, but talked mostly about activities which are organized for the staff. He indicated all kinds of in-service activities organized in his school. Note that these activities were not organized and chaired by himself, but by members of the regional change facilitator team. He just created opportunities for these activities by providing time.

The parents and also the local organizing body of the school are informed about the R.P.S., but they are not involved in the decision making or in some specific activities.

On several occasions (during the interview, but also during the coffee break with the teachers) the principal made it clear that the result of an innovation process is totally determined by the good will of the teachers. "As a principal you can present all kind of suggestions or invite the teachers to try out some activities, but a principal has a very limited power to support an innovation process which lead to real changes in the classroom". Expressions such as : don't hurry, take into consideration reachers' reactions, be careful, etc... were frequently formulated during the interview.

His answer on a question about his future plans, was presented in 1.

5.2.3. School C

F i r s t i n t e r v i e w

1. Preparation/mobilization

As in school A, the principal has taken the first initiative to introduce the R.P.S. She organized information activities of a different nature. Already in the first interview there were some indications that the principal has "pushed" the teachers too much. This was affirmed during the second interview. She also proposed to choose "observation of pupils" as a

typical R.P.S.-activity in her school. By doing so, the innovative activities were reduced almost to one topic.

During the first and second year, the teachers went on by asking questions and making remarks about the feasibility of observing all pupils. They also wondered about the way they could use the observation data for the improvement of their teaching activities.

Planning/dissemination of information

At the end of the schoolyear before the official start with R.P.S., the principal developed an implementation plan in which she specified a number of innovative activities. She consulted with the staff and tried to reach agreements about some concrete activities. But the planned activities were not implemented during the first and the second year. As we already noticed, there was a reduction to one issue, "observation of pupils". In order to train the teacher, the principal herself presented and discussed some "observation sheets" (From the second interview, we know, that at that moment the principal didn't take into consideration the difficulties implicitly stated by the teachers.)

During the first and the second implementation year, the principal continued to make plans, discussed this with the staff and elaborated practical suggestions aimed at changing or improving classroom activities. She also kept her teachers informed about new developments in the R.P.S.

The principal herself disseminated all the plans and written reports (as a result of a staff meeting) among the staff. In the staff room, a so-called "weekcalender" on which all activities related to the R.P.S. were enumerated, made it possible that all teachers were informed.

In a general evaluation (during the second interview) of the way the R.P.S. was introduced in their school, some of the teachers made clear that the principal was very concerned about the image of the school : "now, that we are a R.P.S. let's try to keep it that way". Problems within the school, must be kept inside !

3. Professional contacts

There were clear indications about the existence of professional contacts among teachers. During the monthly staff meeting, teachers informed each other about their activities. In some cases, they gave some advice. Some

teachers exchanged teaching materials. The contacts between the nursery school and the primary school were less elaborated.

4. School-specific character

The implementation process (and the innovation policy) is characterized by a school-specific approach. During the initiation year, and also during the first and second implementation year, all people involved carefully examined the capability of the school and the staff. There was also a tendency to change some activities, taking into consideration the first experiences.

The teachers emphasized the importance of a collaborative effort; school improvement is not the result of activities by individual teachers.
If needed, an external change facilitator was invited for some activities.

E x p e c t a t i o n s

1. We didn't expect any changes as far as the implementation level is concerned. This expectation was based on the observation (first interview) that the purposeful planning and coordiantion by the principal (and the related intervention) were not accepted by all staff members.

2. Second, we expected that "pupil observation" no longer would be a priority issue. Other innovative issues, related to classroom activities, would in 1985 be considered as more important.

3. At last, we expected to meet a burned-out principal, or at least a principal who feels herself overwhelmed by the task related to the R.P.S.

S e c o n d i n t e r v i e w

1. Implementation level

The principal as well as the teacher made it clear during the second interview, that they no longer find it necessary to observe systematically all pupils. All teachers expressed the same feeling : "we have tried to implement the observation activity into our daily practice because of the principal". "She really pushed us in that direction" is a common remark. On the other hand, the teachers also pointed out that as a result of the in-service activities about observation and from their experiences, they are able now to look more carefully at what's going on in the classroom and

how pupils behave. But : "we don't use observation sheets, we keep it in our mind".

The modest activities related to the integration between the nursery school and the primary school and to the collaboration between the different grades, which started in 1981, are still tried out. Compared to 1982, there seems to be now a more planned strategy underlying the integration activities. Nevertheless, there is still a clear wish from the kindergarten to increase the collaboration with the primary school.

As a result of a series of activities, which can be considered as a school-based review, the nursery teachers have decided to implement activities aimed at the improvement of the "concentration" of their pupils. The primary school teachers started discussions about teaching activities related to number concept in the different grades. For both themes, the principal has developed an inservice plan.

A new language method has been introduced. This has lead last year and also this year to an increase of individualized language activities. But there is still a need for more support and adapted teaching materials.

During the second interview teachers admitted that they originally had wrong expectations, especially about the external support. They expected more well designed and tested teaching materials and concrete help and support. In the meantime, they have learned that they have to reflect upon the development of the R.P.S. in their own school. This is also expected and stimulated by the principal.

All of these and other observations lead to the conclusion that a slight increase in the implementation level is plausible. But this conclusion is based on a one-day visit and a fortyfive minute interview with 5 persons. So, we prefer to conclude that in school C there is certainly no decrease of the implementation level.

2. Local innovation policy

During the interview, the principal explicitly stated that initially she has pushed to much "her" innovation (observation of the pupils). She admitted that most teachers demonstrated overtly or covertly some resentment and that she remembers meetings during which she experienced professional tensions. As a result, she has been ill and stayed at home during four months.

There is a second indication of an increased awareness (compared to 1982) of the nature and characteristics of the innovation process going in her school. She explicitly pointed out that during the first months, the teachers expected too much support (see : implementation level). She couldn't satisfy all the expectations and didn't know how to answer all the questions. In 1985, the principal has clearly chosen another approach : in collaboration and after a rather lengthy consultation, she has decided to concentrate the innovative activities on one particular item (kindergarten : concentration; primary school : number concept). She also underlined the necessity to delegate some responsibilities to another staff member or to an external change facilitator.

Third, several times the principal has been to a workshop on "school-based review" organized regionally by the external support. She underlined the importance of this workshop and pointed out some of the benefits. The principal is now able to observe in a more systematic and detailled way her school in general and the innovation process in particular. Now, she feels that, more than before, she knows how to plan and to coordinate these activities necessary for the implementation of some innovative proposals. That she can rely on members of the external support for this planning as well for the organization in her school, is very much appreciated by the principal.

These changed insights and the improved mastery of some support skills as described by the principal, are important. One can assume that these changes will have (and already have had) a positive impact on the local innovation policy.

Related to this, the principal indicated some improvements as far as the teachers' attitudes are concerned towards the local innovative activities (affirmed by the teachers). According to the principal, her leadership is characterized now by continuous attention to the collaboration among teachers by an ongoing diagnosis of the activities in the school and the classroom and by flexible planning. For the planning she relies now more than in 1982 on the external support.

6. Discussion

The three cases lead to the conclusion that there is a tendency that the local innovation policy takes on a stable configuration rather early. The chances for changes in this policy are minimal. It's also clear that

the principal plays a major role in the development of a local innovation policy.

Only in school C, were there are some changes in the local policy. This is mainly the result of changes in the principal's insights and approach. This observation seems to be very close to what Fullan has described as a change in the "leadership feel for the improvement process" (Fullan, 1985, p. 400-401).

A lack of changes as far as the implementation level is concerned, is a second major observation. This can be considered as acceptable for school A (already in group 1), especially taking into consideration that the school has a new principal. For schools B and C, one could consider this observation as an example of a "negative institutionalization". The image of a continuous self renewing school is here rather a myth than reality. School B is just happy to belong to the group of "officially accepted" R.P.S.-schools. The underlying innovation philosophy seems to be : "we have now the R.P.S.-label, let's keep it that way". In school C, there are some indications for a positive development in the near future.

Both observations lead to the question of how one should conceptualize "institutionalization". And further both questions make clear the importance of the discussion introduced by Karen Seashore Louis (1985, see p. 9 : Institutionalization as sloth or symbolism ?).

In relation to this last remark, it's very obvious that there is a clear need for follow-up studies. We need follow-up data for a more valid conceptualization of the institutionalization phenomenon (or process) as well as for an empirical elaboration of our assumptions about the main variables (or sub-processes) underlying the implementation and the institutionalization stage.

7. Notes

(1) Since 1980, no new additional schools have started with the R.P.S. In the National Steering Committee it was decided that further expansion should be linked to a more intense preparation. So, during the 1982-'83 and 1983-'84 school year 279 schools went through a "school-based self review". This was considered as an initiation program for these schools which have started the project in 1984-'85.

(2) During this stage, the researchers kept note of important information concerning a school which could not be summarized in the analysis tables. They also wrote down ideas (hypotheses) about variables which seem to determine the local innovation policy.

(3) This is a very short and clearly uncomplete description of a complex procedure developed by the researchers. One can find more information in the final report (January 1985).

(4) The three principals have immediately accepted our proposal for a follow-up interview.

(5) The inter-scorer reliability was very high. We found out that two researchers, for 264 scores, reached an agreement of 80 %.

(6) Here too, we only present the results of a complicated procedure which is fully described and discussed in the end report (January 1985).

8. Literature

Fullan, M., Change processes and strategies at the local level. Elem. Sch. J., 1985 (85), 391-421.

Louis, K. Seashore, Some thoughts on institutionalization. (ISIP, Seminar Lucerne) 1985.